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SUBJECT: ZANZIBAR: RULING PARTY CCM THINKING

This is a re-transmission of Dar es Salaam 124 with a new title.

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: For the ruling party CCM, U.S. development assistance to Zanzibar is welcome, but involvement in the political realm is not. According to Ali Mzee, Chairman of the Zanzibari House of Representatives (representing the mainstream Karume faction of Zanzibar CCM), America should not push too hard, lest the social fabric break. To him, opposition CUF was not a real party but a breakaway faction of CCM opportunists. Real reform would come from within CCM, and such change was coming, he said. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) In early February, Zanzibar Affairs Officer (ZAO) and two visiting Washington analysts visited the Zanzibar House of Representatives Chair Ali Mzee Ali at his residence in Mazizini, a few miles from Stonetown, Zanzibar (Unguja). Ali Mzee began the conversation in a bombastic manner, stating that few outsiders, including mainland Tanzanians, understood Zanzibaris or their history. Even most foreigners, he said, were unaware of their own countries' history in the islands. He pulled out of his pocket a list of dates and events that he started to read to us, but before he got underway, his phone rang. It was President Karume. Perhaps unaware that those present might understand Kiswahili, Mzee Ali took the call in front of us and reviewed with the President his main talking points to us and promised not to stray from the party line.

13. (U) Mzee restarted his talk with an upbeat summary of U.S. - Zanzibar relations, a story that he said "began over 200 years ago and continued hitherto." He went year-by-year through an Archives-supplied list of U.S. ship visits from the 1830's to about the U.S. Civil War, contrasting them to British ship visits of the same period (we had about double the volume of trade, according to his figures). He continued his history lesson with the story of the Afro-Shirazi Party and its merger with TANU in 1977. He also touched on the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar, which he referred to "as an engagement of two sovereign states."

14. (U) Ali Mzee concluded that "Zanzibar respects Americans and regards them as friends." He emphasized that our mutual interaction succeeded regardless of the political changes that occurred in each respective place. "Zanzibar and America are two sovereign states," he continued. "We appreciate your assistance. You do so many things that help our people. Continue to help us economically, for every politician wants to find things to help him survive among his constituents," he said, "but respect our ways." The subtext of his comments, in so many words over the course of the evening, was that the CCM government might not be prepared to do what the United States wanted it to do in the short term. By saying the "two states" should respect each other, what he seemed to be implying was that while U.S. help with Zanzibar's needs in terms of developmental

assistance was welcome, involvement in the political realm was not. America should not push too hard, lest the social fabric break, he warned. The U.S. could remain helpful by its assistance, allowing politicians room to take risks in support of democratic reform.

15. (U) Specifically on reconciliation, Ali Mzee expressed disappointment for the failure between the two parties to strike a deal. "Reconciliation," he said "was a CCM initiative aimed at building up a peaceful Zanzibar." He praised the role of Union President Kikwete in supporting the Muafaka (reconciliation) talks and blamed CUF Secretary General Seif Hamad for their failure. Ali Mzee said Seif Hamad "disclosed to the public what had been agreed to be confidential while the negotiations were ongoing, causing public chaos." Ultimately, he concluded that reconciliation on Zanzibar had less to do with the parties than with the will of the people. Ali Mzee said that Zanzibar's political problems could be best addressed through referendums and opinion polls.

16. (SBU) Loosening up as the evening went on, Ali Mzee said he did not consider CUF to be a legitimate opposition party. Instead, its leaders were "opportunists." Ali Mzee suggested that CUF was more like a wayward faction of CCM. He claimed that before "CCM party reform" in the 1990's, when (current CUF SYG) Seif Hamad was CCM Chief Minister in Zanzibar, he was "as corrupt as the best of them." Similarly, he said that when CUF's "Human Rights Director" Ali Haji Pandu was Zanzibar's Chief Justice in the then-monoparty Zanzibar, he was "about the most ruthless and torture-minded bastard of the bunch." At the same time, current CUF parliamentarian Abubakar Khamis Hamad was Zanzibar's Attorney General. "If you want to criticize CCM, look who was judge, jury and executioner during more

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oppressive times," Ali Mzee asserted. Real change had to come from within the "real CCM," Ali Mzee concluded, adding that internal power centers were already shifting for the better.

17. (SBU) COMMENT AND BIO NOTE: Ali Mzee is a veteran of the mainstream, pro-Karume, pro-Union with Tanzania faction of CCM-Zanzibar. A participant in the bloody 1964 Zanzibar revolution, and a member of the CCM party (and its antecedents) since its inception, Ali Mzee has served in various Tanzanian High Commissions/Embassies over the years, mostly in African countries. However, he landed in jail following the 1972 Karume pere assassination.

18. (SBU) Founding President Karume's youngest son, Abeid, the current Zanzibari President, has a special, personal relationship with Ali Mzee that dates back to the former's youth. The exact relationship between the two is not yet known by ZAO, but it is known that the younger Karume had a role in "rehabilitating" Ali Mzee post-prison and bringing him back into politics from obscurity. Appointed by President Karume in 2000 as one of the six non-elected at-large representatives in Zanzibar's 79-member unicameral legislature, Ali Mzee sits as Chairman of the House ("Mwenyekiti wa Baraza"). Serving under the Speaker ("Spika"), Pandu Ameir Kificho, the titular head of the House, Ali Mzee serves as Whip of the absolute majority CCM. He also chairs the House Committee on "Constitution, Laws and Good Governance." He is known as the "enforcer" of Karume's will in the Parliament; the phone call from Karume at the outset of our conversation and the points Ali Mzee kept repeating to us seem to confirm that.

19. (SBU) Nonetheless, other ZAO interlocutors say to look beyond Ali Mzee's gruff, didactic manner. They say he is a tempering influence on Karume and is key to any CCM liberalization. Ali Mzee loosened up markedly the more we spoke. At the end of the evening he was comfortable - daring even - to show us around his lavish villa, which he plans to turn into a guest house. For his part, Ali Mzee says he is tired of politics and looks forward to retiring with the change of administrations in 2010, "whoever might come in." End Comment.

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